

T H E
G R A V E.

A
P O E M

B Y
ROBERT BLAIR. *κ*

The house appointed for all living. JOB.

L O N D O N,
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T H E
G R A V E.

WHILST some affect the sun, and some
the shade,

Some flee the city, some the hermitage;
Their aims as various, as the roads they take
In journeying thro' life;—the task be mine
To paint the gloomy horrors of the tomb;
Th' appointed place of rendezvous, where all
These travellers meet.—Thy succours I implore,
Eternal King! whose potent arm sustains
The keys of hell and death.—The Grave, dread
thing!

Men shiver, when thou'rt nam'd: Nature
appall'd,

Shakes off her wonted firmness.—Ah! how dark
 Thy long-extended realms and rueful wastes!
 Where nought but silence reigns, and night,
 dark night,

Dark as was chaos, ere the infant sun
 Was roll'd together, or had try'd his beams
 Athwart the gloom profound.—The sickly taper,
 By glimmering thro' thy low-brow'd misty
 vaults,

(Furr'd round with mouldy damps, and ropy
 slime)

Lets fall a supernumerary horror,
 And only serves to make thy night more irksome.
 Well do I know thee by thy trusty yew,
 Chearless, unsocial plant; that loves to dwell
 'Midst skulls and coffins, epitaphs and worms,
 Where light-heel'd ghosts, and visionary shades,
 Beneath the wan cold moon (as fame reports)
 Embody'd, thick, perform their mystic rounds.
 No other merriment, dull tree, is thine.

See yonder hallow'd fane;—the pious work
 Of names once fam'd, now dubious or forgot,
 And bury'd, 'midst the wreck of things which
 were:

There lie interr'd the more illustrious dead.
 The wind is up, hark! how it howls! methinks

Till now I never heard a sound so dreary ;
Doors creek, and windows clap, and night's
foul bird,

Rook'd in the spire, screams loud : the gloomy isles
Black-plaster'd, and hung round with shreds of
'scutcheons

And tatter'd coats of arms, fend back the sound
Laden with heavier airs, from the low vaults,
The mansions of the dead.—Rous'd from their
slumbers,

In grim array the grisly spectres rise,

Grin horrible, and obstinately sullen

Pass and repass, hush'd as the foot of night.

Again the screech-owl shrieks : ungracious sound !

I'll hear no more, it makes one's blood run chill.

Quite round the pile, a row of reverend elms,
(Coæval near with that) all ragged shew

Long lash'd by the rude winds. Some rift half
down,

Their branchless trunks : others so thin a top,

That scarce two crows can lodge in the same tree.

Strange things, the neighbours say, have hap-
pen'd here :

Wild shrieks have issued from the hollow tombs ;

Dead men have come again, and walk'd about ;

And the great bell has toll'd, unring, untouch'd.
 (Such tales their chear, at wake or gossiping,
 When it draws near to witching time of night).

Oft, in the lone church-yard at night I've seen
 By glimpse of moon-shine, chequering thro' the
 trees,

The school-boy with his satchel in his hand,
 Whistling aloud to bear his courage up,
 And lightly tripping o'er the long flat stones,
 (With nettles skirted, and with moss o'ergrown)
 That tell in homely phrase who lie below.

Sudden he starts, and hears, or thinks he hears,
 The sound of something purring at his heels ;
 Full fast he flies, and dares not look behind him,
 Till out of breath he overtakes his fellows ;
 Who gather round, and wonder at the tale
 Of horrid apparition, tall and ghastly,
 That walks at dead of night, or takes his stand
 O'er some new-open'd grave ; and (strange to
 tell !)

Evanesces at crowing of the cock.

The new-made widow too, I've sometimes
 'spy'd,

Sad sight ! slow moving o'er the prostrate dead :
 Listless, she crawls along in doleful black,
 Whilst bursts of sorrow gush from either eye,

Fast falling down her now untasted cheek,
 Prone on the lowly grave of the dear man
 She drops ; whilst busy meddling Memory,
 In barbarous succession, musters up
 The past endearments of their softer hours,
 Tenacious of its theme. Still, still she thinks
 She sees him, and indulging the fond thought,
 Clings yet more closely to the senseless turf,
 Nor heeds the passenger who looks that way.

Invidious Grave—how dost thou rend in sunder
 Whom love has knit, and sympathy made one !
 A tie more stubborn far than Nature's band.
 Friendship ! mysterious cement of the soul ;
 Sweetner of life, and solder of society,
 I owe thee much. Thou hast deserv'd from me,
 Far, far beyond what I can ever pay.

Oft have I prov'd the labours of thy love,
 And the warm efforts of the gentle heart,
 Anxious to please.—Oh ! when my friend and I
 In some thick wood have wander'd heedless on,
 Hid from the vulgar eye ; and sat us down
 Upon the sloping cowslip-covered bank,
 Where the pure limpid stream has slid along
 In grateful errors thro' the under-wood,
 Sweet-murmuring :—Methought the shrill-
 tongu'd thrush

Mended his song of love ; the sooty black-bird
 Mellow'd his pipe, and soften'd ev'ry note :
 The eglantine smell'd sweeter, and the rose
 Assum'd a dye more deep ; whilst ev'ry flower
 Vy'd with its fellow-plant in luxury
 Of dress.—Oh ! then, the longest summer's day
 Seem'd too too much in haste : still the full heart
 Had not imparted half : 'Twas happiness
 Too exquisite to last. Of joys departed
 Not to return, how painful the remembrance !

Dull Grave ! thou spoil'st the dance of youth-
 ful blood,

Strik'st out the dimple from the cheek of Mirth,
 And ev'ry smirking feature from the face ;
 Branding our Laughter with the name of Mad-
 ness.

Where are the Jesters now ? the men of health
 Complexionally pleasant ? Where the Droll ?
 Whose ev'ry look and gesture was a joke
 To clapping Theatres and shouting Crowds,
 And made even thick-lip'd musing Melancholy
 To gather up her face into a smile
 Before she was aware ? Ah ! sullen now,
 And dumb, as the green turf that covers them !

Where are the mighty thunderbolts of war ?
 'The Roman Cæsars, and the Græcian Chiefs,

'The boast of story? Where the hot-brain'd
Youth?

Who the Tiara at his pleasure tore
From Kings of all the then discover'd globe;
And cry'd, forsooth, because his arm was ham-
per'd,

And had not room enough to do its work?

Alas! how slim, dishonourably slim!

And cramm'd into a space we blush to name.

Proud Royalty! how alter'd in thy looks?

How blank thy features, and how wan thy hue?

Son of the Morning! whither art thou gone!

Where hast thou hid thy many-spangled head,

And the majestic menace of thine eyes

Felt from afar? Pliant and powerless now,

Like new-born infant wound up in his swathes,

Or victim tumbled flat upon its back,

That throbs beneath the sacrificer's knife:

Mute must thou bear the strife of little tongues,

And coward insults of the base-born crowd;

That grudge a privilege thou never hadst,

But only hop'd for in the peaceful Grave,

Of being unmolested and alone.

Arabia's gums and odoriferous drugs,

And honours by the Heralds duly paid

In mode and form, ev'n to a very scruple;

Oh cruel Irony! these come too late,
And only mock whom they were meant to honour.

Surely there's not a dungeon-slave that's bury'd
In the highway, unshrouded and uncoffin'd,
But lies as soft, and sleeps as sound as he.
Sorry Pre-eminence; of high descent
Above the vulgar-born, to rot in state!

But see! the well-plum'd Herse comes nod-
ding on;

Stately and slow, and properly attended
By the whole Sable Tribe, that painful watch
The sick man's door, and live upon the dead,
By letting out their persons by the hour
To mimic sorrow, when the heart's not sad.
How rich the trappings, now they're all unfurl'd,

And glitt'ring in the sun! Triumphant entries
Of Conquerors, and Coronation pomps,
In glory scarce exceed. Great gluts of people
Retard th' unwieldy show; whilst from the ca-
sements

And houses tops, ranks behind ranks close-wedg'd
Hang bellying o'er. But! tell us, Why this
waste?

Why this ado in earthing up a carcase

That's fall'n into disgrace, and in the nostril
 Smells horrible?—Ye Undertakers tell us,
 'Midst all the gorgeous figures you exhibit,
 Why is the principal conceal'd, for which
 You make this mighty stir?——'Tis wisely
 done :

What would offend the eye in a good picture,
 The painter casts discreetly into shades.

Proud lineage, now how little thou appear'st
 Below the envy of the private man.
 Honour, that meddling officious ill,
 Pursues thee even to death; nor there stops
 short.

Strange persecution ! when the Grave itself
 Is no protection from rude sufferance.

Aburd to think to over-reach the Grave,
 And from the wreck of names to rescue ours.
 The best-concerted schemes men lay for fame
 Die fast away : only themselves die faster.
 The far-fam'd sculptor, and the laurell'd bard,
 Those bold insurances of deathless fame,
 Supply their little feeble aids in vain.
 The tapering pyramid, th' Egyptian's pride
 And wonder of the world ; whose spiky top
 Has wounded the thick cloud, and long outliv'd
 The angry shaking of the winter's storm :

Yet spent at last by th' injuries of heaven,
Shatter'd with age, and furrow'd o'er with
years,

The mystic cone with hieroglyphics crusted,
At once gives way. Oh! lamentable sight :
The labour of whole ages, lumbers down,
Sepulchral columns wrestle but in vain
With all-subduing Time : her cank'ring hand
With calm deliberate malice wasteth them :
Worn on the edge of days the brass consumes,
The busto moulders, and the deep-cut marble,
Unsteady to the steel, gives up its charge.
Ambition, half convicted of her folly,
Hangs down the head, and reddens at the tale.

Here all the mighty troublers of the earth,
Who swam to sow'reign rule through seas of
blood;

Th' oppressive, sturdy, man-destroying villains,
Who ravag'd kingdoms and laid empires waste,
And in a cruel wantonness of power
Thinn'd states of half their people, and gave up
To want, the rest : now, like a storm that's
spent,

Lie hush'd, and meanly sneak behind the covert.
Vain thought ! to hide them from the general scorn,
That haunts, and doggs them, like an injur'd ghost

Implacable.—Here too the petty tyrant,
 Whose scant domains geographer ne'er notic'd,
 And well for neighb'ring grounds, of arm as short,
 Who fix'd his iron talons on the poor,
 And grip'd them like some lordly beast of prey,
 Deaf to the forceful cries of gnawing Hunger,
 And piteous plaintive voice of Misery,
 (As if a Slave was not a shred of nature,
 Of the same common nature with his Lord)
 Now, tame and humble, like a child that's
 whipp'd,
 Shakes hands with dust, and calls the worm his
 kinsman,
 Nor pleads his rank and birth-right. Under
 ground

Precedency's a jest ; Vassal and Lord,
 Grossly familiar, side by side consume.

When self-esteem, or others adulation,
 Would cunningly persuade us we were something
 Above the common level of our kind,
 The Grave gainsays the smooth-complexion'd
 flatt'ry,
 And with blunt truth acquaints us what we are.

Beauty! thou pretty plaything, dear deceit,
 That steals so softly o'er the Stripling's heart,

And gives it a new pulse, unknown before,
 The Grave discredits thee: thy charms expung'd,
 Thy roses faded, and thy lilies soil'd,
 What hast thou more to boast of? Will thy lovers
 Flock round thee now, to gaze and do thee ho-
 mage?

Methinks I see thee with thy head low laid,
 Whilst, surfeited upon thy damask cheek,
 The high-fed worm, in lazy volumes roll'd,
 Riots unscar'd. For this, was all thy caution?
 For this, thy painful labours at thy glass?
 T'improve those charms, and keep them in repair,
 For which the spoiler thanks thee not? Foul
 feeder!

Coarse fare and carrion please thee full as well,
 And leave as keen a relish on the sense.
 Look how the Fair One weeps! the conscious
 tears

Stand thick as dew-drops on the bells of flow'rs.
 Honest effusion! the swoln heart in vain
 Works hard to put a gloss on its distress.

Strength too! thou surly and less gentle boast
 Of those that laugh loud at the village-ring,
 A fit of common sickness pulls thee down
 With greater ease than e'er thou didst the Stripling
 That rashly dar'd thee to th' unequal fight.

What groan was that I heard? Deep groan
indeed!

With anguish heavy laden! Let me trace it:
From yonder bed it comes, where the strong man,
By stronger arm belabour'd, gasps for breath
Like a hard-hunted beast. How his great heart
Beats thick! his roomy chest by far too scant
To give the lungs full play! What now avail
The strong-built finewy limbs, and well-spread
shoulders?

See how he tugs for life, and lays about him,
Mad with his pain! Eager he catches hold
Of what comes next to hand, and grasps it hard,
Just like a creature drowning. Hideous fight!
Oh! how his eyes stand out, and stare full ghastly!
Whilst the distemper's rank and deadly venom
Shoots like a burning arrow cross his bowels,
And drinks his marrow up. Heard you that
groan?

It was his last. See how the great Goliath,
Just like a child that brawl'd itself to rest,
Lies still! What mean'st thou then, O mighty
boaster!

To vaunt of nerves not thine? What means the
Bull,

Unconscious of his strength, to play the coward,
 And flee before a feeble thing like man,
 That, knowing well the slackness of his arm,
 Trusts only in the well-invented knife?

With study pale, and midnight vigils spent,
 The star-surveying Sage close to his eye
 Applies the sight-invigorating tube;
 And travelling thro' the boundless length of space
 Marks well the courses of the far-seen orbs,
 That roll with regular confusion there,
 In extasy of thought. But, ah! proud man!
 Great heights are hazardous to the weak head!
 Soon, very soon, thy firmest footing fails,
 And down thou dropp'st into that darksome place
 Where nor device, nor knowledge ever came.

Here! the Tongue-Warrior lies, disabled now,
 Disarm'd, dishonour'd, like a wretch that's gagg'd,
 And cannot tell his ail to passers by.
 Great Man of Language! whence this mighty
 change?

This dumb despair, and drooping of the head?
 Tho' strong persuasion hung upon thy lip,
 And sly Insinuation's softer arts
 In ambush lay about thy flowing tongue,
 Alas! how chop-fall'n now! Thick mists and
 silence

Rest, like a weary cloud, upon thy breast
 Unceasing. Ah! where is the lifted arm,
 The strength of actions, and the force of words,
 The well-turn'd period, and the well-tun'd voice,
 With all the lesser ornaments of phrase?
 Ah! fled for ever, as they ne'er had been!
 Raz'd from the book of Fame: Or more pro-
 voking,

Perchance some hackney hunger-bitten scribbler
 Insults thy memory, and blots thy tomb
 With long flat narrative, or duller rhimes
 With heavy-halted pace that drawl along;
 Enough to rouse a dead man into rage,
 And warm with red resentment the wan cheek.

Here! the great masters of the healing art,
 These mighty mock-defrauders of the tomb!
 Spite of their Juleps and Catholicons
 Resign to fate. Proud Æsculapius' Son!
 Where are thy boasted implements of art,
 And all thy well-cramm'd magazines of health?
 Nor hill, nor vale, as far as ship could go,
 Nor margin of the gravel-bottom'd brook,
 Escap'd thy rising hand; from stubborn shrubs
 Thou wrung'st their shy retiring virtues out,
 And vex'd them in the fire: Nor fly, nor insect,
 Nor writhy snake, escap'd thy deep research.

But why this apparatus? Why this cost?
Tell us, thou doughty keeper from the Grave,
Where are thy recipes and cordials now,
With the long list of vouchers for thy cures?
Alas! thou speakest not. The bold impostor
Looks not more silly when the cheat's found out.

Here! the lank-sided Miser, worst of felons!
Who meanly stole, discreditable shift!
From back and belly too, their proper cheer;
Eas'd of a tax it irk'd the wretch to pay
To his own carcase, now lies cheaply lodg'd,
By clam'rous appetites no longer teaz'd,
Nor tedious bills of changes and repairs.
But ah! Where are his rents, his comings in?
Ay! now you've made the Rich Man poor in-
deed;

Robb'd of his Gods, what has he left behind?
Oh! cursed lust of gold! when for thy sake
The fool throws up his int'rest in both worlds,
First starv'd in this, then damn'd in that to come.

How Shocking must thy summons be, O
Death!

To him that is at ease in his possessions;
Who counting on long years of pleasure here,
Is quite unfurnished for that world to come!
In that dread moment, how the frantic soul

Raves round the walls of her clay tenement,
Runs to each avenue, and shrieks for help,
But shrieks in vain! How wishfully she looks
On all she's leaving, now no longer her's!

A little longer, yet a little longer,
Oh! might she stay to wash away her stains,
And fit her for her passage! Mournful fight!
Her very eyes weep blood, and every groan
She heaves is big with horror: But the foe,
Like a stanch murd'rer steady to his purpose,
Pursues her close through ev'ry lane of Life,
Nor misses once the track, but presses on;
Till forc'd at last to the tremendous verge,
At once she sinks to everlasting ruin.

Sure 'tis a serious thing to die! My soul!
What a strange moment must it be, when near
Thy journey's end, thou hast the gulph in view!
That awful gulph, no mortal e'er repass'd
To tell what's doing on the other side.

Nature runs back, and shudders at the sight,
And every life-string bleeds at thought of parting,
For part they must: body and soul must part;
Fond couple; link'd more close than wedded pair.
This, wings its way to its almighty source,
The witness of its actions, now its judge;
That, drops into the dark and noisome Grave,

Like a disabled pitcher of no use.

If death was nothing, and naught after death ;
If when men dy'd, at once they ceas'd to be,
Returning to the barren womb of nothing,
Whence first they sprung, then might the De-
bauchee

Untrembling mouth the heavens:—Then might
the Drunkard

Reel over his full bowl, and, when its drain'd,
Fill up another to the brim, and laugh
At the poor bugbear Death:—Then might the
wretch

That's weary of the world, and tir'd of life,
At once give each inquietude the slip,
By stealing out of being, when he pleas'd,
And by what way ; whether by hemp, or steel.
Death's thousand doors stand open.--Who could
force

The ill-pleas'd guest to sit out his full time,
Or blame him if he goes?—Sure he does well
That helps himself, as timely as he can,
When able.—But if there is an hereafter,
And that there is, conscience, uninfluenc'd
And suffer'd to speak out, tells ev'ry man ;
Then must it be an awful thing to die :
More horrid yet, to die by one's own hand.

Self-murder!—name it not, our island's shame,
That makes her the reproach of neighbouring
states.

Shall nature, swerving from her earliest dictate,
Self-preservation, fall by her own act?
Forbid it heaven! Let not, upon disgust,
The shameless hand be foully crimson'd o'er
With blood of its own lord.—Dreadful attempt!
Just reeking from self-slaughter, in a rage
To rush into the presence of our Judge;
As if we challeng'd him to do his worst,
And matter'd not his wrath.—Unheard of tor-
tures

Must be reserv'd for such: these herd together;
The common damn'd shun their society,
And look upon themselves as fiends less foul.
Our time is fix'd, and all our days are number'd;
How long, how short, we know not:—this we
know,

Duty requires we calmly wait the summons,
Nor dare to stir till heaven shall give permission,
Like centries that must keep their destin'd stand,
And wait th'appointed hour, till they're reliev'd.
Those only are the brave that keep their ground,
And keep it to the last. To run away,
Is but a coward's trick; to run away

From this world's ills, that at the very worst
Will soon blow o'er, thinking to mend ourselves
By boldly vent'ring on the world unknown,
And plunging headlong in the dark—'tis mad;
No frenzy half so desperate as this.

Tell us, ye Dead; will none of you, in pity
To those you left behind, disclose the secret?
Oh! that some courteous ghost would blab it out,
What 'tis you are, and we must shortly be.
I've heard that souls departed have sometimes
Forewarn'd men of their death:—'Twas kindly
done

To knock, and give the alarm.--But what means
This stinted charity?—'Tis but lame kindness
That does its work by halves.—Why might
you not

Tell us what 'tis to die?—Do the strict laws
Of your society forbid your speaking
Upon a point so nice?—I'll ask no more:
Sullen, like lamps of sepulchres, your shine
Enlightens but yourselves. Well, 'tis no matter;
A very little time will clear up all,
And make us learn'd as you are and as close.
Death's shafts fly thick:—Here falls the Village-
Swain,

And there his pamper'd Lord.—The cup goes
round,

And who so artless as to put it by?

'Tis long since death had the majority;

Yet strange! the living lay it not to heart.

See yonder maker of the dead man's bed,

The Sexton, hoary-headed chronicle

Of hard unmeaning face, down which ne'er stole

A gentle tear; with mattock in his hand

Digs through whole rows of kindred and ac-
quaintance,

By far his juniors.— Scarce a scull's cast up,

But well he knows its owner, and can tell

Some passage of his life—Thus hand in hand

The sot has walk'd with death twice twenty
years;

And yet, ne'er yonker on the green laughs louder,

Or clubs a smuttier tale: When drunkards meet,

None sings a merrier catch, or lends a hand

More willing to his cup.—Poor wretch; he
minds not

That soon some trusty brother of the trade

Shall do for him what he has done for thousands.

On this side, and on that, men see their friends

Drop off, like leaves in autumn: yet launch out

Into fantastic schemes, which the long livers

In the world's hale and undegenerate days,

Could scarce have leisure for.—Fools that we are,

Never to think of death and of ourselves
 At the same time : as if to learn to die
 Were no concern of ours——Oh ! more than
 fottish,

For creatures of a day in gamesome mood
 To frolic on Eternity's dread brink
 Unapprehensive ; when, for ought we know,
 The very first swoln surge shall sweep us in.
 Think we, or think we not, time hurries on
 With a resistless, unremitting stream ;
 Yet treads more soft than e'er did midnight-
 thief, -

That slides his hand under the Miser's pillow,
 And carries off his prize.—What is this world ?
 What ? but a spacious burial-place unwall'd,
 Strew'd with Death's spoils, the spoils of animals
 Savage and tame, and full of dead men's bones.
 The very turf on which we tread, once liv'd ;
 And we that live must lend our carcases
 To cover our own offspring :—In their turns
 They too must cover their's,——'Tis here all
 meet :

The shiv'ring Icelander and sun-burnt Moor :
 Men of all climes that never met before,
 And of all creeds, the Jew, the Turk, and Chri-
 stian.

Here the proud prince, and favourite yet prouder,
 His sov'reign's keeper, and the people's scourge,
 Are huddled out of sight.—Here lie abash'd
 The great negotiators of the earth,
 And celebrated masters of the balance,
 Deep read in stratagems, and wiles of courts.
 Now vain their treaty-skill:—Death scorns to
 treat.

Here the o'erloaded slave flings down his burden
 From his gall'd shoulders:—and when the cruel
 tyrant,
 With all his guards and tools of pow'r about
 him,
 Is meditating new unheard-of hardships,
 Mocks his short arm—and, quick as thought,
 escapes

Where tyrants vex not, and the weary rest.
 Here the warm lover, leaving the cool shade,
 The tell-tale echo, and the babbling stream,
 (Time out of mind the fav'rite seats of love)
 Fast by his gentle mistress lays him down
 Unblasted by foul tongue.—Here friends and
 foes

Lie close; unmindful of their former feuds,
 The lawn-rob'd Prelate and plain Presbyter,

E'er while that stood aloof, as shy to meet,
 Familiar mingle here, like sister streams
 That some rude interposing rock had split.
 Here is the large-limb'd peasant :——Here the
 child

Of a span long, that never saw the sun,
 Nor press'd the nipple, strangled in life's porch.
 Here is the mother with her sons and daughters;
 The barren wife, and long-demurring maid,
 Whose lonely unappropriated sweets
 Smil'd like yon knot of cowslips on the cliff,
 Not to be come at by the willing hand.
 Here are the prude severe, and gay coquet,
 The sober widow, and the young green virgin,
 Cropp'd like a rose before 'tis fully blown,
 Or half its worth disclos'd.——Strange medley
 here!

Here garrulous old age winds up his tale;
 And jovial youth of lightsome vacant heart,
 Whose every day was made of melody,
 Hears not the voice of mirth:—The shrill-
 tongu'd shrew,
 Meek as the turtle-dove, forgets her chiding.
 Here are the wise, the generous, and the brave;
 The just the good, the worthless, the profane,
 The downright clown, and perfectly well-bred;

The fool, the churl, the scoundrel, and the mean,
 The supple statesman, and the patriot stern,
 The wrecks of Nations, and the spoils of Time,
 With all the lumber of six thousand years.

Poor man!—how happy once in thy first state!
 When yet but warm from thy great Maker's
 hand,

He stamp'd thee with his image, and well pleas'd
 Smil'd on his last fair work.--Then all was well.
 Sound was the body, and the soul serene,
 Like two sweet instruments, ne'er out of tune,
 That play their several parts.—Nor head nor
 heart

Offer'd to ache:—Nor was there cause they
 should;

For all was pure within:—No fell remorse
 For anxious castings-up. of what might be,
 Alarm'd his peaceful bosom:—Summer seas
 Shew not more smooth, when kiss'd by southern
 wind

Just ready to expire.——Scarce importun'd,
 The generous soil, with a luxurious hand,
 Offer'd the various produce of the year,
 And ev'ry thing most perfect in its kind.

Blessed! thrice blessed days!——But ah! how short!

Bless'd as the pleasing dreams of holy men;
But fugitive like those, and quickly gone.

Oh! slipp'ry state of things!——What sudden turns?

What strange vicissitudes in the first leaf
Of man's sad history?—To-day most happy,
And ere to-morrow's sun has set, most abject.
How scant the space between these vast extremes!

Thus far'd it with our fire:—Not long h' enjoy'd
His paradise.—Scarce had the happy tenant
Of the fair spot due time to prove its sweets,
Or sum them up, when strait he must be gone,
Ne'er to return again.—And must he go?
Can nought compound for the first dire offence
Of erring man?—Like one that is condemn'd,
Fain would he trifle time with idle talk,
And parley with his fate.—But 'tis in vain.
Not all the lavish odours of the place
Offer'd in incense can procure his pardon,
Or mitigate his doom.—A mighty angel
With flaming sword forbids his longer stay,
And drives the loiterer forth; nor must he take
One last and farewell round.—At once he lost

His glory and his God.——If mortal now
And sorely maim'd, no wonder.--Man has sinn'd,
Sick of his bliss, and bent on new adventures,
Evil he would needs try, nor try'd in vain.

(Dreadful experiment! destructive measure!
Where the worst thing could happen, is success.)
Alas! too well he sped:—The good he scorn'd,
Stalk'd off reluctant, like an ill-us'd ghost,
Not to return;—or if it did, its visits,
Like those of angels, short and far between:
Whilst the black Dæmon with his hell-scap'd
train,

Admitted once into its better room,
Grew loud and mutinous, nor would be gone,
Lording it o'er the man, who now too late
Saw the rash error which he could not mend:
An error fatal not to him alone,
But to his future sons, his fortune's heirs.
Inglorious bondage!—Human nature groans
Beneath a vassalage so vile and cruel,
And its vast body bleeds through ev'ry vein.

What havock hast thou made, foul monster, Sin
Greatest and first of ills! The fruitful parent
Of woes of all demensions!——But for thee
Sorrow had never been.—All-noxious thing,

Of vilest nature! Other sorts of evils
 Are kindly circumscrib'd, and have their bounds.
 The fierce volcano, from his burning entrails
 That belches molten stone and globes of fire,
 Involv'd in pitchy clouds of smoke and stench,
 Marrs the adjacent fields for some leagues round,
 And there it stops.—The big-swoln inundation,
 Of mischief more diffusive, raving loud,
 Buries whole tracks of country, threat'ning more;
 But that too has its shore it cannot pass.
 More dreadful far than these! Sin has laid waste,
 Not here and there a country, but a world:
 Dispatching at a wide-extended blow
 Entire mankind; and for their sakes defacing
 A whole creation's beauty with rude hands;
 Blasting the foodful grain, the loaded branches,
 And marking all along its way with ruin.
 Accursed thing!—Oh! where shall fancy find
 A proper name to call thee by, expressive
 Of all thy horrors?—Pregnant womb of ills!
 Of temper so transcendently malign,
 That toads and serpents of most deadly kind,
 Compar'd to thee, are harmless.—Sicknesse
 Of ev'ry size and symptom, racking pains,
 And bluest plagues, are thine.—See how the
 fiend

Profusely scatters the contagion round!

Whilst deep-mouth'd Slaughter, bellowing at her
heels,

Wades deep in blood new-spilt; yet for to-morrow
Shapes out new work of great uncommon daring,
And inly pines till the dread blow is struck.

But hold! I've gone too far; too much discover'd
My Father's nakedness, and Nature's shame.

Here let me pause, and drop an honest tear,

One burst of filial duty and condolence

O'er all those ample desarts Death hath spread,
This Chaos of mankind. O great Man-Eater!

Whose ev'ry day is carnival, not fated yet!

Unheard-of epicure! without a fellow!

The veryest gluttons do not always cram;

Some intervals of abstinence are sought

To edge the appetite: Thou seekest none.

Methinks the countless swarms thou hast devour'd,

And thousands that each hour thou gobblest up;

This, less than this, might gorge thee to the full.

But ah! rapacious still, thou gap'st for more,

Like one whole days defrauded of his meals,

On whom lank Hunger lays her skinny hand,

And whets to keenest eagerness his cravings;

As if diseases, massacres, and poison,

Famine, and war, were not thy caterers.

But know that thou must render up thy dead,
 And with high int'rest too: they are not thine,
 But only in thy keeping for a season,
 Till the great promis'd day of restitution,
 When loud-diffusive sound from brazen trump
 Of strong-lung'd Cherub shall alarm thy captives,
 And rouse the long, long sleepers into life,
 Day-light, and liberty,————
 Then must thy gates fly open, and reveal
 The mines that lay long forming under-ground,
 In their dark cells immur'd; but now full ripe,
 And pure as silver from the crucible,
 That twice has stood the torture of the fire,
 And inquisition of the forge. We know
 Th' illustrious Deliverer of mankind,
 The SON of GOD, thee foil'd. Him in thy pow'r
 Thou couldst not hold; self-vigorous he rose,
 And, shaking off thy fetters, soon retook
 Those spoils his voluntary yielding lent.
 (Sure pledge of our releasement from thy thrall.)
 Twice twenty days he sojourn'd here on earth,
 And shew'd himself alive to chosen witnesses
 By proofs so strong that the most slow-assenting
 Had not a scruple left. This having done,
 He mounted up to heav'n. Methinks I see him
 Climb the ærial heights, and glide along

Athwart the severing clouds ; but the faint eye,
Flung backwards in the chace, soon drops its
hold,

Disabled quite, and jaded with pursuing.
Heaven's portals wide expand to let him in,
Nor are his friends shut out; as some great prince
Not for himself alone procures admission,
But for his train: it was his royal will
That where he is, there should his followers be.
Death only lies between; a gloomy path!
Made yet more gloomy by our coward fears,
But not untrod, nor tedious: the fatigue
Will soon go off. Besides, there's no by-road
To Bliss. Then why, like ill-condition'd chil-
dren,

Start we at transient hardships in the way
That leads to purer air, and softer skies,
And a ne'er-setting sun? Fools that we are!
We wish to be where sweets unwith'ring bloom,
But strait our wish revoke, and will not go.
So have I seen upon a summer's even,
Fast by the riv'let's brink a Youngster play:
How wishfully he looks! To stem the tide
This moment resolute, next unresolv'd;
At last he dips his foot; but, as he dips,
His fears redouble, and he runs away

From th' inoffensive stream, unmindful now
 Of all the flow'rs that paint the further bank,
 And smil'd so sweet of late. Thrice welcome
 Death !

That after many a painful bleeding step
 Conducts us to our home, and lands us safe
 On the longwish'd-for shore. Prodigious change,
 Our bane turn'd to a blessing ! Death disarm'd,
 Loses her fullness quite : All thanks to him
 Who scourg'd the venom out. Sure the last
 end

Of the good man is peace ! How calm his exit !
 Night-dews fall not more gently to the ground,
 Nor weary worn-out winds expire so soft.
 Behold him, in the evening-tide of life,
 A life well spent, whose early care it was
 His riper years should not upbraid his green :
 By unperceiv'd degrees he wears away ;
 Yet, like the sun, seems larger at his setting.
 High in his faith and hopes, look how he reaches
 After the prize in view ; and, like a bird
 That's hamper'd, struggles hard to get away !
 Whilst the glad gates of sight are wide expanded
 To let new glories in, the first fair fruits
 Of the fast-coming harvest. Then, oh ! then
 Each earth-born joy grows vile, or disappears,

Shrunk to a thing of nought. Oh! how he longs
 To have his passport sign'd, and be dismiss'd!
 'Tis done, and now he's happy: the glad soul
 Has not a wish uncrown'd. Ev'n the lag flesh
 Rests too in hope of meeting once again
 Its better half, never to sunder more.

Nor shall it hope in vain: the time draws on
 When not a single spot of burial-earth,
 Whether on land, or in the spacious sea,
 But must give back its long-committed dust
 Inviolatè: and faithfully shall these
 Make up the full account; not the least atom
 Embezzled or mislaid of the whole tale.

Each soul shall have a body ready furnish'd,
 And each shall have his own. Hence ye prophane,
 Ask not, how this can be? Sure the same Pow'r
 That rear'd the piece at first, and took it down,
 Can re-assemble the loose scatter'd parts,
 And put them as they were. Almighty God
 Has done much more, nor is his arm impair'd
 Thro' length of days; and what he can, he will:
 His faithfulness stands bound to see it done.

When the dread trumpet sounds, the slumb'ring
 dust,

Not unattentive to the call, shall wake,
 And ev'ry joint possess its proper place

With a new elegance of form, unknown
 To its first state. Nor shall the conscious soul
 Mistake its partner; but amidst the croud
 Singling its other half, into its arms
 Shall rush, with all th' impatience of a man
 That's new-come home; who, having long been
 absent,

With haste runs over ev'ry different room,
 In pain to see the whole. Thrice happy meeting!
 Nor time, nor death, shall ever part them more.

'Tis but a night, a long and moonless night,
 We make the Grave our bed, and then are gone.

Thus at the shut of ev'n, the weary bird
 Leaves the wide air, and in some lonely brake
 Cow'rs down, and dozes 'till the dawn of day,
 Then claps his well-fledg'd wings, and bears
 away.

FINIS.



E L E G Y

WRITTEN IN A
COUNTRY CHURCH-YARD.

BY MR. GRAY.

THE curfew tolls the knell of parting day,
The lowing herd wind slowly o'er the lea;
The plowman homeward plods his weary way,
And leaves the world to darkness and to me.

Now fades the glimm'ring landscape on the sight,
And all the air a solemn stillness holds,
Save where the beetle wheels his drony flight,
And drowsy tinklings lull the distant folds;

Save that from yonder ivy-mantled tow'r
The moping owl does to the moon complain
Of such as, wand'ring near her secret bow'r,
Molest her ancient solitary reign.

Beneath those rugged elms, that yew-tree's shade,
Where heaves the turf in many a mould'ring heap,
Each in his narrow cell for ever laid,
The rude forefathers of the hamlet sleep.

The breezy call of incense-breathing morn,
The swallow twitt'ring from the straw-built shade,
The cock's shrill clarion, or the echoing horn,
No more shall rouse them from their lowly bed.

For them no more the blazing hearth shall burn,
Or busy house-wife ply her ev'ning care;
No children run to lisp their fire's return,
Or climb his knees the envied kifs to share.

Oft did the harvest to their sickle yield,
Their furrow oft the stubborn glebe has broke;
How jocund did they drive their team a-field!
How bow'd the woods beneath their sturdy stroke!

Let not ambition mock their useful toil,
Their homely joys and destiny obscure;
Nor grandeur hear, with a disdainful smile,
The short and simple annals of the poor.

The boast of heraldry, the pomp of pow'r,
And all that beauty, all that wealth e'er gave,
Await alike th' inevitable hour.
The paths of glory lead but to the grave.

Nor you, ye proud, impute to these the fault,
If mem'ry o'er their tomb no trophies raise,
Where thro' the long-drawn isle and fretted vault
The pealing anthem swells the note of praise.

Can storied urn, or animated bust,
Back to its mansion call the fleeting breath?
Can honour's voice provoke the silent dust,
Or flattery sooth the dull cold ear of death?

Perhaps in this neglected spot is laid
Some heart once pregnant with celestial fire;
Hands, that the rod of empire might have sway'd,
Or wak'd to ecstasy the living lyre.

But knowledge to their eyes her ample page
Rich with the spoils of time did ne'er unroll;
Chill penury repress'd their noble rage,
And froze the genial current of the soul.

Full many a gem of purest ray serene
The dark unfathom'd caves of ocean bear;
Full many a flow'r is born to blush unseen,
And waste its sweetness on the desert air.

Some village-Hampden, that with dauntless breast
The little tyrant of his fields withstood;
Some mute inglorious MILTON here may rest,
Some CROMWELL guiltless of his country's blood.

Th' applause of list'ning senates to command,
The threats of pain and ruin to despise,
To scatter plenty o'er a smiling land,
And read their hist'ry in a nation's eyes

Their lot forbade: nor circumscrib'd alone
Their growing virtues, but their crimes confin'd:
Forbade to wade thro' slaughter to a throne,
And shut the gates of mercy on mankind.

The struggling pangs of conscious truth to hide,
To quench the blushes and ingenuous shame,
Or heap the shrine of luxury and pride
With incense kindled at the muse's flame.

Far from the madding crowd's ignoble strife,
 Their sober wishes never learnt to stray;
 Along the cool sequester'd vale of life
 They kept the noiseless tenor of the way.

Yet ev'n these bones from insult to protect,
 Some frail memorial still erected nigh,
 With uncouth rhimes and shapeless sculpture
 deck'd,
 Implore the passing tribute of a sigh.

Their name, their years, spelt by th'unletter'd muse,
 The place of fame and elegy supply:
 And many a holy text around she strews,
 That teach the rustic moralist to die.

For who to dumb forgetfulness a prey,
 This pleasing anxious being e'er resign'd,
 Left the warm precincts of the cheerful day,
 Nor cast one longing ling'ring look behind?

On some fond breast the parting soul relies,
 Some pious drops the closing eye requires;
 Ev'n from the tomb the voice of nature cries,
 Ev'n in our ashes live their wonted fires.

For thee, who mindful of th' unhonour'd dead
Dost in these lines their artless tale relate :
If chance, by lonely contemplation led,
Some kindred spirit shall enquire thy fate,

Haply, some hoary-headed swain may say,
' Oft have we seen him at the peep of dawn
' Brushing with hasty steps the dew away
' To meet the sun upon the upland lawn.

' There at the foot of yonder nodding beech
' That wreathes its old fantastic roots so high,
' His listless length at noon-tide would he stretch,
' And pore upon the brook that hobbles by.

' Hard by yon wood, now smiling as in scorn,
' Mutt'ring his wayward fancies he would rove ;
' Now drooping, woful man, like one forlorn,
' Or craz'd with care, or cross'd in hopeless love.

' One morn I miss'd him on the custom'd hill,
' Along the heath and near his fav'rite tree ;
' Another came ; nor yet besides the rill,
' Nor up the lawn, nor at the wood was he ;

‘ The next, with dirges hue and sad array,
 ‘ Slow thro’ the church-way path we saw him
 borne,
 ‘ Approach and read (for thou canst read) the lay,
 ‘ Gray’d on the stone beneath yon aged thorn.’

The E P I T A P H.

HERE rests his head upon the lap of earth,
 A youth to fortune and to fame unknown;
 Fair science frown’d not on his humble birth,
 And melancholy mark’d him for her own.

Large was his bounty and his soul sincere,
 Heav’n did a recompence as largely send:
 He gave to mis’ry all he had, a tear,
 He gain’d from heav’n (’twas all he wish’d) a
 friend.

No farther seek his merits to disclose,
 Or draw his frailties from their dread abode,
 (There they alike in trembling hope repose)
 The bosom of his father and his God



A
N I G H T - P I E C E
O N
D E A T H.

BY the blue taper's trembling light
No more I waste the wakeful night,
Intent with endless view to pore
The schoolmen and the sages o'er:
Their books from wisdom widely stray,
Or point at best the longest way,
I'll seek a readier path, and go
Where wisdom's surely taught below.

How deep yon azure dies the sky!
Where orbs of gold unnumber'd lie!
While thro' their ranks in silver pride
The nether crescent seems to glide.
The slumb'ring breeze forgets to breathe,
The lake is smooth and clear beneath,

Where once again the spangled show
 Descends to meet our eyes below.
 The grounds which on the right aspire,
 In dimness from the view retire :
 The left presents a place of graves,
 Whose wall the silent water laves :
 That steeple guides thy doubtful sight
 Among the livid gleams of night.
 There pass with melancholy state
 By all the solemn heaps of fate,
 And think, as softly-sad you tread
 Above the venerable dead,
Time was, like thee thy life possess'd,
And time shall be, that thou shalt rest.

Those graves, with bending osier bound,
 That nameless heave the crumbled ground,
 Quick to the glancing thought disclose,
 Where toil and poverty repose.

The flat smooth stones that bear a name,
 The chissel's slender help to fame,
 (Which ere our set of friends decay
 Their frequent steps may wear away)
 A middle race of mortals own,
 Men half ambitious, all unknown.

The marble tombs that rise on high,
 Whose dead in vaulted arches lie,
 Whose pillars swell with sculptur'd stones,
 Arms, angels, epitaphs, and bones,
 These, all the poor remains of state,
 Adorn the rich, or praise the great ;
 Who, while on earth in fame they live,
 Are senseless of the fame they give.

Ah ! while I gaze, pale Cynthia fades,
 The bursting earth unveils the shades !
 All flow, and wan, and wrapp'd with shrouds,
 They rise in visionary crouds,
 And all with sober accent cry,
 Think, mortal, what it is to die.

Now from yon black and fun'ral yew,
 That bathes the charnel-house with dew,
 Methinks I hear a voice begin ;
 (Ye ravens, cease your croaking din,
 Ye tolling clocks, no time resound
 O'er the long lake and midnight ground)
 It sends a peal of hollow groans,
 Thus speaking from among the bones.

When men my scythe and darts supply,
 How great a king of fears am I !
 They view me like the last of things ;
 They make, and then they dread my stings.
 Fools ! if you less provok'd your fears,
 No more my spectre-form appears.
 Death's but a path that must be trod,
 If man wou'd ever pass to God :
 A port of calms, a state of ease
 From the rough rage of swelling seas.

Why then thy flowing sable stoles,
 Deep pendent cypress, mourning poles,
 Loose scarfs to fall athwart thy weeds,
 Long palls, drawn hearses, cover'd steeds,
 And plumes of black, that, as they tread,
 Nod o'er the scutcheons of the dead ?

Nor can the parted body know,
 Nor wants the soul, these forms of woe :
 As men who long in prison dwell
 With lamps that glimmer round the cell,
 When e'er their suffering years are run,
 Spring forth to greet the glitt'ring sun :
 Such joy, though far transcending sense,
 Have pious souls at parting hence.

On earth, and in the body plac'd,
A few and evil years they waste :
But when their chains are cast aside,
See the glad scene unfolding wide !
Clap the glad wing, and tow'r away,
And mingle with the blaze of day.

F I N I S.

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